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GLOBAL FUND COMMITS HALF OF \$15 MILLION BUDGET FOR CRG SPECIAL INITIATIVE

The Global Fund has committed approximately \$7 million of the \$15 million budget for its Community Rights and Gender (CRG) Special Initiative. Each of the initiative's three arms – technical assistance (TA) provision, key populations network strengthening, and regional communication and coordination platforms – have received relatively equal amounts.

The initiative runs until the end of 2016.

On the TA arm, 40 applicants for technical assistance, spanning 22 countries, have received nearly \$2 million in funding. [Thirty-four TA providers](#) have been identified and 65 TA requests have been received to date. This is one example of the progress made since Aidspan [last reported](#) on the initiative.

Another example of momentum is the selection of eight grantees for long-term capacity building support, in partnership with the Robert Carr Network Fund (RCNF):

- Asia Pacific Transgender Network (APTN)
- Global Forum on MSM & HIV (MSMGF)
- Global Network of Sex Workers Project (NSWP)
- International Network of People Who Use Drugs (INPUD) / Asia Network of People Who Use Drugs (ANPUD)
- AIDS Rights Alliance of Southern Africa (ARASA) / International Treatment Preparedness Coalition (ITPC)
- The International Community of Women with HIV/AIDS (ICW)
- Positive Network Consortium (PNC+)

- YouthLEAD

These grantees have received disbursements totalling \$2.6 million for 2015 activities as part of the initiative's key populations network strengthening arm.

Progress is also evident in the third arm of the special initiative, as hosts for the regional platforms have been established (see table).

Table: Regional communication and coordination platform hosts for the CRG special initiative

Region	Host of Regional Platform
Anglophone Africa	Eastern Africa National Networks of AIDS Service Organizations (EANNASO)
Francophone Africa	Réseau Accès aux Médicaments Essentiels (RAME)
Middle East and North Africa	ITPC MENA
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	EECA Consortium*
Asia Pacific	Asia Pacific Council of AIDS Service Organisations (APCASO)
Latin America and the Caribbean	CRAT: Alliance Regional Technical Hub Support Hub

* The consortium includes: the Eurasian Harm Reduction Network (EHRN), the Alliance Regional Technical Support Hub for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA HUB), the Eurasian Coalition on Male Health (ECOM), INPUD, the Eastern Europe and Central Asian Union of People Living with HIV (ECUO), and the TB Europe Coalition.

The purpose of the regional platforms is closely linked to the TA provision and the network strengthening arms of the special initiative. The platforms are intended to enhance understanding of community TA needs and coordinate with other TA initiatives, as well as support civil society and community knowledge and capacity development related to the Global Fund. The expected allocation for the platforms is \$4 million. To date, \$2.6 million has been committed, though not yet dispersed, to four of the six platforms.

As all three arms get off the ground, the Fund held its first partners meeting for the CRG special initiative from 18-20 August 2015 in Bangkok, Thailand. The meeting brought together TA providers, RCNF grantees and regional platform hosts to connect relevant actors and activities, identify lessons learned, and consider future directions after the two-year initiative ends.

At the meeting, partners flagged several emerging challenges. Participants raised the issue of demand creation for TA and the inherent conflict of interest providers may face in generating demand for their own services. One option suggested was that the regional platforms play a larger role in generating demand for TA.

Another issue was the high number of requests that have been received for TA which the special initiative does not fund. Participants discussed the need for greater clarity around the CRG initiative's funding mandate so that applicants do not waste time and effort requesting TA that is beyond its scope.

Participants also called for greater transparency concerning how the Fund pairs eligible TA requests with providers; half of TA providers have been given assignments so far – some as many as three – while the other half has yet to be matched with any.

Further, participants were critical of the fact that TA provision through the special initiative ends after the

grant-making phase instead of continuing on during grant implementation so that principal recipients could be held accountable throughout the grant lifecycle.

The Fund acknowledged that one of the limitations of the special initiative was that the selected RCNF grantees are highly HIV-focused, with just one of the eight networks expanding its scope to include TB. In addition, despite the fact that the eight networks cover 50 countries, none of these countries is in the EECA region. It was suggested that the EECA regional platform might be able to fill this gap, but it was not clear how realistic this suggestion is because some fundamental concerns regarding the platforms were identified.

Participants said that it is unclear how the platforms will coordinate with regional Global Fund grants, many of which aim to achieve similar objectives. Critical questions were also posed concerning how the platforms would measure their success.

Olive Mumba, Interim Executive Director of EANNASO (regional platform host for Anglophone Africa), emphasized that the platforms must support the inclusion and participation of communities in a very deliberate way. “The regional platforms will have to develop toolkits, methodologies and systematic approaches that promote community engagement but also quantitatively measure their own impact,” she told Aidspace. EANNASO has already begun developing [such methodologies](#) for the Anglophone Africa platform, measuring the influence of civil society priorities setting during concept note development.

Editor’s Note: This article was amended after it was sent out to subscribers to identify the TB Europe Coalition as one of the members of the EECA Consortium. Previously, the article referred to the Coalition as a “regional TB network.”

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